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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Nord-Sud XXI - North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Persecuting Christian Community in Pakistan

The country's political and economic fragility mean that the more moderate faction within the political elite have to work harder to challenge a popular mindset which, at least in some parts of the country, has been "Talibanised", as one former Pakistan archbishop once put it.

In Muslim majority Pakistan, it is unthinkable for many in society to imagine Christians doing anything but the lowliest jobs. In Urdu-language newspapers there are adverts promoting jobs for street cleaners where the wording specifically encourages Christians to apply. Many Christians are trapped in feudal-style working practices, toiling in brick kilns, getting deeper and deeper into debt. They feel they have no option but to pressure their children to join the workforce to increase family income.

dioceses are devising new strategies to enable their communities – especially the young – to focus on education and training in order to get into university and land better jobs. But for many young people it is an uphill struggle in the face of stigmatization.

For many Christian girls it is harder still, especially those living in poorer, rural areas where illiteracy is high. In a society often accused of being strongly chauvinistic, they face the double stigma of belonging to a disenfranchised gender as well as a minority religious faith.

There are constant cases of girls and women from Christian and other religious minority backgrounds suffering abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage, with sexual violence the norm. "These cases get reported to us almost every week," said a priest anonymously. He said he has received physical threats in his efforts to stand up for them, winning them back from their abductors and working with organisations representing them in court.

Battered and bruised by many setbacks, discrimination and episodes of persecution, the people's faith is the surest guarantee of hope in a time of renewed uncertainty.

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/christians-in-pakistan-suffer-plight/>